Christian Community

Volume 8 No. 3 March, 1956

There Are Causes to Be Supported

When the cause of Christian Social Action is presented, two comments are frequently made, obviously intended to account for the lack of response in many congregations. One is the assertion, "We do not have any problems in our community." The other is expressed something like this: "Of course, it is all right to carry on bold, experimental programs in a mission congregation or in a special project; but ours is an old established church and we cannot afford to launch out on our own."

In recent issues of *Christian Community* we have attempted to illustrate some of the approaches which a church in many kinds of community might undertake. While circumstances vary and the specific problems differ, in every community there are needs to be met, there are people to be served, there are evils to be fought. And if none of these are at first sight evident to a consistory or a committee which has not learned to see them, we would venture to suggest that at least in every community that has any life at all, *there are causes to be supported.*

In this issue we have sampled a few of what might be a long list of such causes. And in every instance, the challenge has been met by a minister, or a group, or a congregation in an established church which has been nurtured on pretty much the "conventional" sort of program.

The happy experience of Pilgrim Church, Buffalo, in facing up to the opportunity of becoming an inclusive fellowship, rather than fearing it as a problem, could be duplicated in scores of our churches in many cities, suburbs, and even in small towns if they are willing and far sighted.

The efforts of Salem Church, in that same city, to carry on an effective program of community outreach also began in a normal response to a normally changing community situation. It is true, Salem has reached the point where in order to meet the challenge more ade-

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2. Economic Justice

By Emil N. Krafft

The Cleveland Worsted Mills of Cleveland, located in the industrial south-eastern section of the city for the past seventy-five years, employing two thousand people and touching approximately five thousand lives, has in the past years resisted all efforts on the part of the employes to organize. Last August another unsuccessful effort was made and thus a strike was called. The demands were for a seven-and-one-half cent wage increase, improvement in working conditions, and a contract. All were rejected, the company refusing to negotiate with the Textile Workers Union. Every available public agency, usually called in to assist in such strikes, was approached; but these had no success.

The Southeast Community Center, composed of religious groups of all faiths, educational leaders, and business interests, felt a responsibility and offered

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1. Effective Citizenship

How can church people translate their Christian concern into effective action as Citizens?

There is a great deal involved in becoming acquainted with the issues before the public, the processes by which they are resolved, and all the factors which must be taken into consideration. And there are, fortunately, increasingly more adequate and varied resources for finding one's way in the complex of agencies and operations which make up the United States Government. However, there are few more interesting ways of hearing about the problems and meeting the people who are at work on them than the Churchmen's Washington Seminar which this year met in the nation's capital February 7 to 10.

The four days spent in large public meetings and small group conferences

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Some of the 26 Evangelical and Reformed Delegates at the 1956 Churchmen's Washington Seminar

2. Economic Justice

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its good offices to help bring about an end to the unfortunate situation. A delegated committee of the Center sought an interview with the management, but the company refused to accord the committee a hearing. The union officials, on the other hand, were very cooperative, even to the extent of dropping their demand for the wage increase.

After four months the company called a meeting of the stockholders for the purpose "of considering liquidation or such action deemed best by the stockholders." When the Community Center's civic committee, consisting of the city councilman, two priests, and the writer, asked for permission to attend the stockholders meeting to plead against liquidation, it was turned down; but, securing proxies in time, the committee attended the meeting and made a strong plea for continuation of the company in order that two thousand people would not be jobless. The meeting of the stockholders was a mere formality since the necessary proxies for liquidation had been secured prior to the meeting. Thus it was voted to discontinue the business. The religious leaders who spoke to the president of the company after the meeting were called "pawns" of the union.

Doubt was expressed whether the strike was mainly responsible for dissolution of the company, that perhaps "the strike was used as a ruse" for some other reason.

A liquidating committee was appointed to take such steps as it deems advisable; there is little hope that the company will be reorganized and put back to work at least some of the men and women who had worked at the mills for over forty years or more and whose only qualifications are in the weaving industry. It is the hope that perhaps some other industry will occupy the large buildings and thus employ some who have lost their jobs. The religious leaders have, however, made the point that "we are not only interested in saving souls but also in saving jobs" if possible.

3. Inclusive Fellowship

By Roland F. F. Roehner

Perhaps there is coincidental significance in the fact that it was on "Reformation" Sunday, two years ago, that Pilgrim Church, Buffalo, took the initial step to reflect within its membership the changing racial complexion of its community by welcoming its first Negro member. Since then, his new-born son has been baptized, and his family has become integrated into the life of the Church, which, though predominantly white, also includes in its membership a Senaca Indian and a Japanese-American. On any given Sunday, the presence of these racial and cultural heritages makes it perceptibly evident that the Christian Gospel is universal, and that inter-racial Brotherhood and Christian Fellowship are synonymous.

In brief, the story is this: No previous attempt had been made by the congregation to solicit new-comers to the community of diffeernt racial origin. It came as a totally new experience when, one Sunday morning, the congregation discovered a Negro to be a part of its worshipping fellowship. On succeeding Sundays the Pastor, in private conversation, assured such new-comers that the door of the Church was open to all who would worship in the name of Christ. In order to prevent undue curiosity and apprehension, special care was taken to assimilate new-comers into the active program of the Church by inviting them to participate in such groups as the Choir, the Brotherhood and the College Discussion Group, prior to their request for membership. In this way they first came to be accepted as 'persons,' and their friendship had already been established in natural group relationships.

During this past year, Mr. Wallace Cannon, the Negro member in question, was well received in the homes of our parish as he served with a white member on an Every Member Canvass Visitation Team. He also served on a Brotherhood Committee. His family also participates in social functions. Mr. John Waterman, an Indian American, has on several occasions spoken to groups on Indian lore and customs. The Reverend Joseph S. Sakumura, Japanese-American college work director of the Buffalo Council of Churches, conducted an Adult Class on "The World's Religions," and shared with the Pastor in a Communion Service.

A year ago, the writer was approached by a District Scout Executive and informed of the felt need to create better racial understanding on the District level, since the Scouting Program embraced an area undergoing racial change. In response, Pilgrim Church appointed Mr. Cannon as its Institutional Representative, who then served on the District level. Mr. Cannon has since been made Chairman of the Advancement Committee, which is one of the most influential committees. His recommendation for the appointment to this committee came from a member of a neighborhood church which has been resisting attempts made by its Pastor to admit Negro members. The results of Mr. Cannon's contribution to Scouting are noted in a letter recently received from the District Scout Executive: "We were more than appreciative of your appointment of Mr. Wallace Cannon as Institutional Representative. He certainly is an outstanding man and has contributed a great deal to the running of the District operation." We have recently been informed that other Negroes are now serving on the District level, and that a healthy attitude now exists.

Most thrilling, in the past two years, has been the fact that our New Members Classes need never be told that, as Christians, we seek to be an inclusive fellowship: the fact is self-evident the moment a visitor worships with us. Nor have we noticed a decrease of those desiring membership. New-comers accept our present fellowship as normal, because they are soon to discover that a natural relationship evolves out of a fellowship of kindred minds.

Sometimes one hears the snide remark, "God gave us our relatives; thank God we can choose our friends." But sometimes, possibly at first to our embarrassment or chagrin, our friends choose us. May we thank God, with humble contrition, that by His grace this can be so.

The Fence **is an illustrated popular leaflet explaining why our immigration laws need to be changed and what church groups can do about it. Copies may be secured from the Commission on Christian Social Action for 5c each or $4.00 per hundred.**

There Are Causes to Be Supported

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quately it is calling upon the resources of the Board of National Missions. The significant thing, however, is that the congregation itself is taking the initiative—rather than, as has happened in so many similar situations, running to the Board of National Missions for assistance in "running away" from its opportunity.

If neither of these experiences is directly relevant to the situation in your own church, the account of the Churchmen's Washington Seminar points to a cause which needs to be emphasized and served more effectively in *every* community—namely, the cause of effective, responsible Christian citizenship. While not every congregation can have a Washington Seminar of its own, every synod can avail itself of the opportunity of sending a representative and making such a person available to local congregations. But there are other means of educating for effective citizenship—the publications of the Commission on Christian Social Action, like *Roll Call* and *Questions for Christians* which the Commission will cooperate in distributing, occasional regional or state seminars on political problems, and meetings which can be set up on many current areas of concern within the community or county.

There are other types of causes which we have not had room to outline. In some communities or states there is need for institutional reform. Several years ago the members of our Evangelical and Reformed churches were very much in the forefront of a movement which resulted in the complete overhauling of the mental hospital structure of a midwestern state. The cause of education about international problems, while supported by many local and national organizations, can be carried forward considerably by the church—and sometimes church groups are the only ones that are willing to be heard.

The cause of economic justice is another one which appears in many forms in various sections of the land. Sometimes a special group—like the employes of Cleveland Worsted Mill, or a group of migrant agricultural workers—need a spokesman. Sometimes it is in the area of bringing about general understanding, quite apart from a crisis situation, between representatives of labor and management. Sometimes, it is a matter of getting a hearing for farmers who are being "squeezed off" the land, or for the unemployed who deserve more adequate benefits, in a community where these causes are unpopular.

Incidentally, the experience of Dr. Krafft in the Cleveland situation should serve to remind us that not always are our efforts successful in achieving their immediate aim. This does not mean that we should abandon these efforts or choose only those which are guaranteed to meet with success. After all, it is stated on very good authority that it is required of stewards, not that they be successful but rather that they be faithful.

Good housing, good schools, good recreational facilities, good human relations—what is the cause which cries for support in your community? Is there any institution which has more right than the church to give expression to the thought, the mind, and the conscience where such values are at stake?

4. Community Outreach

By Paul C. Jordan

Salem Church is located in a 'high potential' area. No, we are not located in a suburb, but rather in the inner city of Buffalo. It is the excessive human need that exists in the heart of any large city, characterized by its congested, transient, intercultural, and inter-racial pattern, which makes it a 'high potential' area; an opportunity for the Christian church to meet these needs with its witness of brotherhood, compassion, and redemption.

Several years ago a study was made of the Evangelical and Reformed Churches of this area, and we began to think seriously of our responsibility to the community. We began to think of the people who live within the shadow of our church. With Thanksgiving money that every year had been designated for a benevolent cause, we made a beginning in community work among the children. We acquired the services of a young Negro lady, a college graduate, who was looking forward to returning to school for the purpose of earning a degree in religious education. With her leadership we worked out a weekday program of religion, crafts, and recreation. Through the winter months we ministered to about fifty children, both Negro and white.

Our Vacation Bible School, which was held the first two weeks after the close of the public school, was a real experience in Christian Brotherhood. Eighty children registered, breaking all previous records. Thirty of these children were Negro. The faithfulness and Christian spirit of the teachers and workers bore witness to their desire to make a reality of the Gospel of our Saviour.

Several children of both races are now enrolled in the Sunday School as a result of this program. Since the beginning of last Fall the Pastor has been able to carry on a Wednesday afternoon religious instruction class for some of these children whose parents do not belong to the Church.

The young Negro lady returned to school last fall, and we have not been able to carry on a weekday program this winter because of inability to secure someone to take her place. However we are looking forward to full time help in the spring when the Board of National Missions will support our efforts.

Our local Board of Christian Education is hoping to support several of these community children in one of the Dunkirk Summer Camps this year. Our community work is to be a part of the very life stream of our Church. It is our hope that we can integrate these children, whether Negro or white, and their parents, into the life of our Church that they may share in our worship and activities.

We have suffered as every church in the heart of the city because of the changing of city life and population. We do not complain, but rather thank God that He has given us spiritual vision to see our opportunity, the courage to want to meet the challenge, and hearts that have something of the compassion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Our prayer is that we might be found worthy of this trust God has given us.

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Published by the Commission on Christian Social Action of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, 2969 West 25th St., Cleveland 13, Ohio. Executive Secretary and Editor: Huber F. Klemme; Associate Secretaries: F. Nelsen Schlegel and Chester L. Marcus. Sent free to pastors and social action committees. Individual subscriptions, 75 cents; group subscriptions, 10 or more to one address, 50 cents each per year. Single copies, 10 cents; ten or more, 5 cents each.

1. Effective Citizenship

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centered around many aspects of federal government policy and legislation. Of great value was the opportunity given the delegates to visit with senators and members of the House of Representatives, and to discuss with them some of the issues with which Congress is wrestling.

Significant also were the agency conferences, in which members were given a chance to meet with officials in eight different government agencies in order to learn how the Administration deals with such problems as Federal Aid to Education, Juvenile Delinquency, Technical Assistance, Control of Subversive Activities, Indian American Affairs, Immigration and Refugee Programs, Natural Resources, and Agricultural Policy. All of the delegates met with the Honorable John Sherman Cooper, United States Ambassador to India, and with State Department officials, for a review of some of the current problems in United States foreign policy.

Of considerable interest also were the dinner meetings. At one of these two prominent Congregationalists, Dr. Buell Gallagher, President of the College of the City of New York, and Mr. Frank McCulloch, Administrative Assistant to Illinois Senator Paul Douglas spoke of Christian Responsibility for Civic and Political Life. At another such meeting Minnesota Senator Hubert H. Humphrey and the Honorable Roswell B. Perkins, of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, presented Democratic and Republican views on "Issues in the 1956 Campaign." At yet another dinner meeting California Senator William F. Knowland and the Honorable Ernest A. Gross, former Deputy United States Representative to the United Nations, shared in a discussion of United States Foreign Policy in Relation to Asia.

This year's Seminar, considered outstanding by leaders who have had close contact with similar conferences in previous years, was sponsored by the Christian social action agencies of seventeen denominations, in cooperation with the Washington staff of the National Council of Churches. Of the 275 participants, 26 persons from ten synods made up the Evangelical and Reformed delegation. One of them, the Reverend Clarence K. Gebhart, of Hamilton, Ohio, President of Southwest Ohio Synod, served as chaplain of the day and offered the invocation in the House of Representatives on Thursday, February 9th.

Under the leadership of the Reverend F. Nelsen Schlegel, Associate Secretary of the Commission on Christian Social Action, and the Reverend Ray Gibbons, Director of Council for Social Action, Evangelical and Reformed delegates had opportunity for fellowship with ministers and laymen of the Congregational Christian Churches. Mr. Schlegel also served as chairman of one of the general sessions.

Urge Continued Use of Commitment Program

With night sessions in one case running until after midnight, the Commission on Christian Social Action held a busy three-day meeting at Concordia Church, Washington, D. C., January 31 through February 2.

Commending the many congregations which had participated in the cooperatively sponsored Emphasis on Christian Commitment and Christian Community, the Commission took action urging those congregations which had not done so last year to use or adapt the program of visitation, worship, study and action this coming fall at some other convenient season.

A revised Policy for Congregations of the Evangelical and Reformed Church in Areas of Increasing Negro Population, recommended by the Joint Committee on Race Relations, was approved. It was also decided to request the General Synod as well as Boards and Agencies holding national conferences, to meet only where facilities are available to all persons without discrimination.

Taking note of the untimely death of the Reverend Robert D. Brodt, the Commission adopted the following resolution: "We, the members of the Commission on Christian Social Action, mourn the passing of our friend and coworker, the Reverend Robert D. Brodt. His wisdom and leadership as he served the church through his membership on our Commission will be hard to replace. We can but trust the wisdom of Almighty God, who has called him to a realm of greater glory, and we pray that his wife and the members of his family and congregation may find comfort and strength in this hour of great sorrow."

Mr. Robert D. Smink, principal of Andrew Curtain Junior High School, Williamsport, Pennsylvania, was appointed to fill Mr. Brodt's position as chairman of the Commission's committee on religion and public education.

A feature of the meeting was a conference at the State Department, arranged by Dr. Henry C. Koch, pastor of Concordia Church and chairman of the Commission's Committee on International Relations, through the cooperation of Mr. Harry Seamans, information liaison officer of the Department, who has frequently assisted church groups in the past. Very helpful background statements were presented and questions concerning their fields of responsibility answered by Robert Rinden, Regional Planning Officer for the Far East and Theodore Frye of the Near East Office, who dealt with the Arab-Israeli conflict. Following this the conference, attended by over 50 persons from Potomac and other eastern synods, returned to Concordia Church for a fellowship luncheon which was addressed by Charles M. Smith, Associate Director of the Washington Office of the National Council of Churches.

WHO'S WHO

The Reverend Paul C. Jordan, a graduate of Eden Seminary, is pastor of Salem Church on Sherman Street, Buffalo, New York.

The Reverend Emil N. Krafft,D. D., pastor of St. John's Church, Cleveland, Ohio, is a member of the General Council of the Evangelical and Reformed Church and a past president of Northeast Ohio Synod.

The Reverend Roland F. F. Roehner, pastor of Pilgrim Church, Buffalo, received his theological training at Yale Divinity School.